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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 002061

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SUBJECT: USAFRICOM COMMANDER GENERAL WARD MEETS WITH
AFRICAN UNION LEADERSHIP

Classified By: CDA Roger Meece, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: During their August 20 meeting at African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, USAFRICOM Commander General William E. (Kip) Ward and African Union Commission Chairperson Jean Ping discussed U.S./Africa cooperation in combating narco-trafficking through Africa, as well as ongoing USG efforts to assist the African Union to prevent and resolve conflicts. General Ward emphasized that AFRICOM's response to the narco-trafficking problem would continue to be guided by State Department policies, and any assistance provided would be at the request of African states. Ping said Africa's capacity to fight narco-traffickers was limited, and he welcomed the assistance of the United States. The drug traffic is not only transiting West Africa, he said, it is creating a criminal element in some countries, which in turn threatens to destabilize the region. There was also a review of developments in Somalia, Niger, the Great Lakes Region, and Sudan. General Ward was in Ethiopia to address the 2nd AFRICOM Academic Symposium organized by the African Center for Strategic Studies. End Summary.

12. (C) USAFRICOM Commander General Ward, accompanied by CDA Roger Meece, and USAU and AFRICOM aides, called on African Union Commission Chairperson Ping in his AU headquarters office on August 20. Ping was accompanied by his aides, including Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra. Ping focused discussion on narco-trafficking through Africa, a subject that has gained more prominence within the AU in recent months. Ping confided that all West African heads of state have asked him to intervene. Ping cited the island nation of Cape Verde as an example of a country that has shown a willingness to resist the narco-trafficking.

13. (C) Commissioner Lamamra said the AU is particularly concerned about the case of Guinea-Bissau, where a military coup within the past year appears to have been linked to narco-trafficking. In Guinea-Bissau, the drug traffic has "infected" all institutions, including the army, according to Ping. The military there has thus far refused assistance from fellow African states, so it may take a regional power such as Nigeria to get involved, Ping added.

14. (C) Ping recommended that former Angolan Foreign Minister Joao Bernardo de Miranda, the AU's envoy to Guinea-Bissau, brief AFRICOM on the narco-trafficking issue. Miranda would know which elements of the Bissauan government might be

willing to cooperate with the international community. The AU Commission leader said he feared the "infection" would spread to Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Senegal, Nigeria, Mauritania, and Togo. Moreover, it is only a matter of time before terrorists, such as Al-Qaida in the Maghreb, link up with narco-traffickers, Ping asserted. African states lack the capacity to fight the scourge effectively, he added. The AU and South American states are planning to meet in Caracas, Venezuela, in late September to discuss narco-trafficking through Africa and devise an action plan for addressing the problem.

15. (C) General Ward reassured Ping that AFRICOM programs in the region were continuing. An example is the African Partnership Station, which is being expanded to southern and eastern Africa. AFRICOM also collaborates with European countries on drug trafficking issues. General Ward also cited the African Maritime Law Enforcement Programs, which are joint operations that provide vessels with the necessary authorities and capabilities to conduct boardings, searches, seizures, and arrests in designated areas of operation. General Ward acknowledged that the problem in Guinea-Bissau was having an "amoeba effect" in the region and he agreed that, left unchecked, the problem could spread to other nations. Any AFRICOM engagement in Guinea-Bissau or elsewhere on the continent would be guided by U.S. national security policy, he added.

16. (C) Turning to the growing phenomenon of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, Ping said he feared piracy in the Niger River Delta might expand throughout the Gulf of Guinea, similar to

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the spreading piracy in the Indian Ocean. The Central African coastline is at risk not only because pirates covet the petroleum being exported from countries in the region, including Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea, but also because of illegal fishing. Once again, the AU lacks the capacity to fend off these illicit activities. General Ward again underscored AFRICOM's willingness to assist those nations that seek U.S. assistance in taking action against smugglers, pirates, and illegal fishermen.

17. (C) Aside from narco-trafficking through Africa, General Ward and Chairperson Ping also touched on several of Africa's conflicts, including those in Somalia, Sudan, and the Great Lakes Region, and they reviewed the fragile situation in Niger, where President Tandja has recently defied his critics by winning a constitutional referendum extending his term in office.

18. (C) On Somalia, Ping reported that he had a meeting with new AMISOM Force Commander Major General Nathan Mugisha of Uganda who assured him that AMISOM has made some progress, and that the TFG is no longer under imminent threat of defeat. Moreover, Burundi is ready to send a fourth battalion to Mogadishu. (Note: Uganda is also prepared to send a fourth battalion. The addition of these two battalions would bring the AMISOM total force to 6,800, still short of the mandated 8,000. End note.) From Ping's perspective, the greater issue is political. The Somali Transitional Federal Government is not strong enough, in Ping's assessment. There are factions within the government, and financial problems that are keeping the Somali government from keeping up with troop salaries and obtaining arms. He cited some funds intended for local security forces have been siphoned off by officials. The Brussels pledging conference last spring yielded strong pledges, but the transfer of those funds has been slow, Ping said. Regarding allegations of outside influence in Somalia, Ping said there have been diplomatic efforts by the AU and the Arab League to discourage countries, such as Iran, Qatar, and Eritrea from playing a negative role in Somalia.

19. (C) The situation in Niger is worrisome, Ping told General Ward. Ping opined that Tandja was driven to push for a third

term because of a falling out with his Prime Minister, whom he was grooming as his successor. President Tandja rebuffed diplomacy by the AU, Nigeria, and others, and has "sacked" his political opponents. Rumors persist of an eventual coup d'etat in Niger, possibly led by younger officers who see the senior leadership as corrupted by Tandja, he said. "The situation is very volatile. If Tandja stays, a coup is possible," he warned.

¶10. (C) On the DRC, General Ward gave a favorable assessment of developments, including AFRICOM's assistance to the Congolese in training a battalion that can serve as a model for other activities in the DRC. However, General Ward made clear that this must be accompanied by other government reforms to ensure these military elements are properly supported and "don't revert to the bush and become part of the problem." Ping, for his part, assessed that the Congolese army since the time of President Mobutu Sese Seko was incapable of protecting the country, and expressed skepticism that U.S. military assistance could change that reality. When Ping visited President Kabila last year, he urged him not to rely solely on a military solution to the DRC's conflict with Rwanda and Congolese rebel leader Laurent Nkunda, but rather to pursue a political solution as well. Now that Nkunda has been captured and the DRC and Rwanda are on good terms, they need to tackle the remaining challenges -- returning Rwandan Hutu militiamen operating in DRC to Rwanda and reintegrating them there, and rooting out Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army.

¶11. (C) With regard to Sudan, Ping made clear the AU's position in support for the principles of the International Criminal Court, but also its opposition to the Court's approach in handling the arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir. The AU takes a holistic view of Sudan, which is why it has warned the West not to pursue the

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ICC's agenda as this could jeopardize the peace process in Darfur as well as between the North and South. Lamamra said the high-level panel chaired by Thabo Mbeki would release its report on Darfur in September, and by all accounts, the panel has been doing a good job. Ping applauded U.S. Special Envoy Scott Gration for taking a more "coherent" approach toward the GOS than his predecessors did.

¶12. (C) General Ward assured Ping that AFRICOM's commitment to the AU is solid, citing recent technical assistance provided by a communications team to the AU. Although the USG has strict procedures and rules related to the transfer of materiel to the AU, General Ward said AFRICOM would work hard to make the communications equipment (Command, Control, and Communication Information System -- or C3IS) available.

¶13. (U) General Ward has cleared this cable.
MEECE